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On the other hand, technical and ecologic restrictions doom some kinds of behavior to failure and reward others, while the presence of other actors imposes strategic constraints and opportunities that modify the allocations people can make and will benefit from making.

I would therefore argue that it is unfruitful to explain a social form, a pattern, directly by hypothesizing a purpose for it. Individual actors and individual management units have purposes and make allocations accordingly; but a social form, in the sense of an over-all pattern of statistical behavior, is the aggregate pattern produced by the process of social life through which ecologic and strategic constraints channel, defeat, and reward various activities on the part of such management units.

This analytic perspective stands in marked contrast to the anthropological predilection for going from a generalized type construct of a social form to a list of “prerequisites” for this general type. Though these two exercises are so close in many formal respects, their objectives are strikingly different. In one case, a social form, or a whole society, is seen as a morphological creature with certain requirements that need to be ascertained, in the functionalist tradition, the better to understand how it is put together. In the other case, a social form is seen as the epiphenomenon of a number of processes, and the analysis concentrates on showing how the form is generated. Only the

latter view' develops concepts that directly promote the understanding of change.